

## BOOK NOTICE

*American Spiders* by Willis J. Gertsch, Ph.D. D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., Toronto, New York, London, 1949.  $8\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$  inches. xiii + 285 p. 32 col. pl. 32 black and white pl., 6 text figs. \$6.95.

Many entomologists know nothing about spiders although it is virtually impossible to collect insects without coming into contact with spiders. When I think of the hundreds of these interesting creatures that I allowed to escape, unmolested, from my sweep-net in the past, I am amazed at my neglect of this astonishing group, whose predaceous activities, in enormous numbers, are barely appreciated. However it is still possible for me to read the extraordinary accounts of the life histories, habits, morphology and peculiarities of these animals, of which Doctor Gertsch has written, in fascinating detail, from his abundant knowledge and studies.

His book which is admirably planned and executed begins with statements about spiders in general, legendary beliefs, and their place in nature. These are followed by a chapter on the life of the spider which includes ballooning; egg laying; egg sacs; early development; molting; longevity; its ability to drop an appendage, its habit of sucking the juice from the dropped appendage, and the subsequent regeneration of the appendage. There are chapters on silk spinning, courtship, the evolution of spiders, the tarantulas, the cribellate spiders, the aerial web spinners and the hunting spiders together with accounts of their economic and medical importance, the spider fauna of North America, a glossary, and a brief bibliography.

Although the book does not deal with identification, its excellent colored and black and white illustrations, together with textual statements, enable the reader to identify the most common species. Doctor Gertsch's book should do much to remove the unwarranted enmity with which spiders are regarded by most persons and its entertaining and informative text should provide many with a new approach toward the study of this comparatively neglected group. Everyone interested in natural history, specialist and non-specialist will enjoy Doctor Gertsch's skillful presentation and his authentic and extensive insight into araneology.—H. B. W.